Director's Corner

I am often asked whether what's happening today is reminiscent of the 1930s and 1940s. I am careful to say that that was a unique period of evil and consequences of anti-Semitism. But if there is one element of today's world that has the potential of such consequence for the Jewish people, it is that combination of the themes that Jews are the evil, hidden power together with Iran's building nuclear weapons. It is said that it would be irrational for Iran to use nuclear weapons against Israel considering Israel's own capacity, but when the premises of the regime toward Jews are so irrational, one can't depend on rational assumptions or behavior.

Take Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust. It is not merely anti-Semitism because it lies about the great catastrophe for the Jewish people. It is so as well because of the underlying theme. After all, how is it possible that the whole world — through books, through U.N. ceremonies, through movies, through memorials — acknowledges in great detail this event but it didn't really happen? The proverbial answer is: The Jews control all forms of communication in the world and have imposed their lies, their fantasies in order to get world support for the State of Israel and other sinister goals.

In my view, that is the direct connection between Mr. Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial and his statements calling for Israel to be wiped off the map. His position: If Jews and Zionists are so insidious, evil and powerful, we can justify destroying the Jewish state.

At the same time, lesser, but also dangerous, manifestations of such thinking have appeared in the West.

In Europe, ADL has been conducting opinion polls in 11 countries. What we have found, disturbingly, is that some of the same classic anti-Semitic attitudes are alive and well. More than half the people in the countries surveyed believe that their Jewish citizens are more loyal to Israel than to their own country. And 30 percent to 40 percent believe that Jews have too much influence in business and politics. Nothing new about this.

And in America with the phenomenon of accusing Jews of controlling U.S. Middle East policy to the detriment of the country, as seen in the Professors John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen M. Walt of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, former President Jimmy Carter, and in Congressman James Moran (D-VA), there is a new mainstream challenge to the Jewish community.

This is a multipronged threat to America, to world Jewry, to the ADL. We take it very seriously. One thing we can promise: We will not be intimidated. You will hear our voice.

Abraham H. Foxman
Anti-Defamation League National Director

Table of Contents

3 NEWS BYTES
ADL meets with U.N. officials, exposes anti-Semitism in Arab media.

FEATURE

4 NO NUCLEAR IRAN!
Turning back the threat of a nuclear Iran should be at the top of the world's agenda.

FOCUS

6 ADL CAMPAIGN GALVANIZES PROTEST AGAINST BRITISH UNIONS' ISRAEL BOYCOTT
ADL counters proposed boycotts of Israel by British unions.

6 NEW ADL POLLS: ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE RISE IN EUROPE
ADL finds classic anti-Jewish attitudes on the upswing in Europe.

7 *THE DEADLIEST LIES*
New book by Abraham H. Foxman rebukes the myth of Jewish control.

8 SHANA AMY GLASS NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: SHAPING ADL'S NEXT GENERATION

New young leadership is briefed on ADL issues at the Shana Amy Glass National Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C.

8 GOING UP TO THE HILL
Glass National Leadership participants lobby Congress on ADL issues.

DEPARTMENTS

9 ABOVE AND BEYOND
10 A CLOSER LOOK
12 EDUCATION
14 INTERFAITH
15 GENEROUS SPIRIT
16 ACROSS THE COUNTRY
19 PEOPLE
19 WHAT YOU CAN DO
19 OFFICE CONTACT NUMBERS
20 PROTECT THE FUTURE

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